

Establish a Regular Mindfulness Practice

A USC Well-being Collective Toolkit



September 2020

USC Well-being Collective

The USC Well-being Collective harnesses the power of Collective Impact for a variety of distinct and often siloed academic departments, administrative units, recognized student organizations and local non-profits to come together and work with the whole student community towards our common agenda: **strengthening a campus culture driven by student wellbeing.**

This goal is supported by four interrelated strategic goals:

Equity and Inclusion – enhancing the culture of equity and inclusion

Resilience and Thriving – creating a culture where individuals and communities thrive

Alcohol and Other Substance Use – disrupting the culture of at-risk substance use

Consent and Healthy Relationships — fostering a culture of consent and healthy relationships

Introduction

Today, mental health professionals have access to various levels of treatment that can effectively help people with a variety of mental health concerns. Many colleges are going beyond simply providing treatment services by expanding efforts to prevent mental health problems from arising and promote the mental well-being of all students. In other words, they are adopting a public health approach to address the social and environmental risk factors that influence student mental health (Davidson & Locke, 2010; SPRC, 2004). Factors affecting student mental health and ability to thrive can be shaped by individual attitudes and beliefs about mental illness, interpersonal group norms, institutional environments, community access to mental health resources and public policies. With the practice of connecting young people early to mental hygiene skill building, emotional support and treatment, institutions can cultivate a culture where individuals and communities thrive.

Stress, indecisiveness, behavior and emotional management, and automatic thoughts can all take up space in students' minds. Higher education professionals see and feel the weight of this fullness as they work with students. Increasing stress on college campuses is no secret. Counseling and wellness staff work to meet the needs of students as best they can, however the encouragement of personal skill-building can equip students with the ability to self-manage and cope. One tool to help students manage their thoughts and emotions is mindfulness. This practice can help students manage emotions, increase ability to be an engaged learner, improve memory and focus, as well as relieve stress and anxiety.

Establishing a Regular Mindfulness Practice

Toolkit Description:

Establishing a regular mindfulness practice in higher education

Strategic Goals:

Equity + Inclusion

Thrive + Mental Health

At-Risk Substance Abuse

Consent + Healthy Relationships

Strategies:

Building healthy public policy

Creating supportive environments

Strengthening community action

Developing personal skills

Re-orienting all sectors towards prevention

A Toolkit For:

Faculty

Staff

Student

Parent/Guardian

Administrator

Goal

Living in a new environment outside the familiarity of home can create overwhelming and stressful circumstances. College students can greatly benefit from understanding that a certain amount of stress is normal, but that too much stress can be unhealthy and unproductive. Knowing the signs of stress, its causes, and how to manage it can be great tools to promote and preserve good mental health.

Establishing mindfulness skills is an affirming practice which can promote positive mental hygiene and self-management. The aim of this strategy is to introduce mindfulness-based activities and providing students the skills in which to manage common emotional challenges related to the student experience.

Intended Outcomes

Key Performance Indicators:

- Increase positive mental health

Additional Outcomes:

- Decreased levels of depression and anxiety (Dvorakova et. al, 2017)
- Increased life satisfaction (Dvorakova et. al, 2017)
- Improved sleep quality (Dvorakova et. al, 2017)
- Increased attention and awareness (Shapiro et. al, 2008)
- Decrease in perceived stress (Cohen & Miller, 2009; Greeson et. al, 2014)
- Increased positive mood states (Jain et. al, 2007)

Evidence of Effectiveness

Scientifically Supported - Strategies with this rating are most likely to make a difference. These strategies have been tested in many robust studies with consistently positive results.

Implementation Ideas

For Faculty

Offer mindfulness or other resiliency skill building activities during class breaks or as a part of the course.

Link students to resources that support their personal resilience and well-being.

Encourage students to seek co-curricular and volunteer opportunities.

Faculty can verbally remind students to practice stress management behaviors and to utilize campus resources like Mindful USC.

Faculty or TAs can periodically throughout the semester (perhaps before/after exam reviews, paper submissions, and examinations themselves) walk-through simple 3-5 minute breathing or mindfulness exercises with the entire class.

Faculty can include campus resources regarding mindfulness and stress management resources in the syllabus.

For Staff

Staff can link students to campus resources and flyers, take-aways with examples of mindfulness activities.

Staff can verbally remind students to utilize campus resources like Mindful USC.

Staff can model practicing mindfulness, grounding exercises and invite students

For Students

Student leaders can provide information and connect their peers to resources for various types of mindfulness activities and exercises.

Student leaders can encourage peers and organizations to practice stress management behaviors and utilize campus resources like Mindful USC.

Student leaders can integrate mindfulness practices and activities into their organization (e.g., meetings, group chats, listservs).

Student groups can practice routine breathing, grounding, and mindfulness exercises at the start or end of meetings.

Implementation Resources

Mindful USC

Mindful USC is a resource available to all students, staff, and faculty in the USC community. Services include regular practice groups, free online guided meditations and mindfulness exercises, ongoing classes, and a free mindfulness app. **Recorded audio** versions are also available.

Office of Religious Life - Movement Meditation

ORL at USC offers free weekly classes to students and staff.

Yoga USC

A compilation of yoga offerings through USC

References

Cohen, J. S., & Miller, L. J. (2009). Interpersonal mindfulness training for well-being: A pilot study with psychology graduate students. *Teachers College Record*, 111(12), 2760-2774.

Dvorakova, K., Kishida, M., Li, J., Elavsky, S., Broderick, P., Agrusti, R., Greenberg, M. (2017). Promoting healthy transition to college through mindfulness training with first-year college students: Pilot randomized controlled trial. *Journal of American College Health*, 65(4), 259-267.

Shapiro, S. L., Oman, D. , Thoresen, C. E., Plante, T. G. &; Flinders, T. (2008). Cultivating mindfulness: effects on well-being. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 64, 840-862.

Jain, S., Shapiro, S.L., Swanick, S. Roesch, S.C, Mills, P. Bell, I., & Schwartz, G. E. (2007).

Annals of Behavioral Medicine, 33(1), 11-21. Greeson, J. M., Juberg, M. K., Maytan, M., James, K., & Rogers, H. (2014). A randomized controlled trial of Koru: A mindfulness program for college students and other emerging adults. *Journal of American College Health*, 62(4), 222-233.

Produced Examples

USC Verdugo Hills Hospital presents:

Mindful Eating Series

New Year, New You



This 10-week lecture series is designed to help you start 2020 right by reinforcing the connection between your health and your food.

Please join us every Wednesday morning from 10 - 11 am.

LOCATION

USC Verdugo Hills Hospital
1812 Verdugo Blvd.
Glendale, CA 91208

Check in at front desk for location each week.

SCHEDULE

January 16: Nutrition 101

January 23: Defend Your Health

January 30: Jump Start Your Day with Breakfast

February 6: Food Labels

February 13: Heart Healthy Foods

February 20: Hydration

February 27: Protein and Aging

March 5: Dining Out Made Simple

March 12: Mindful Eating

March 19: Grocery Store Tour

REGISTRATION

Call (818) 952-2228 or visit uscvh.org/mindful-eating to register.

USC Verdugo Hills Hospital

Keck Medicine of USC

USC Student Health

Office for Health Promotion Strategy

Backbone for the USC Well-being Collective

The Office for Health Promotion Strategy, backbone for the USC Well-being Collective, is embedded in USC Student Health and serves as the administrative core to support campus partners in aligning their strategic objectives with student wellbeing. The Office for Health Promotion Strategy works with participating partners, the Steering Committee, and most importantly, students to activate change at USC.

For additional questions, please contact: USC Student Health, Office for Health Promotion Strategy, Backbone for USC Well-being Collective at wellbeingcollective@usc.edu

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